Faith in Buddhism

By
H.H.Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara
Supreme Patriarch of Thailand

Translated by
James Hopkins

The Office of the Supreme Patriarch's Secretary
Wat Bovoranives Vihara
Bangkok

วัดบวรนิเวศวิหาร
กฎิหลวงกัมปนาทแสนยากร
3111101000034

title:
Faith in Buddhism

author:
Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara
Supreme Patriarch of Thailand

translator:
James Hopkins

publisher:
The Office of the Supreme Patriarch's Secretary
Wat Bovoranives Vihara, Bangkok, Thailand
Tel. 281-2831-3 Fax. (662) 280-0343

cover designer:
Chuchati Meun-inkul

printed in Bangkok by:
Surawat Printing Press Ltd ., Part. Tel. & Fax. (662) 281-4700

First English Edition, 1993

© All rights reserved. Permission to reprint for free distribution will be given upon notification.

Faith in Buddhism

Contents:

Foreword v

Translator's Introduction vi

What is Buddhism? 1

Teachings of Buddhism 6

Principles of Kamma 11

Faith in Buddhism 18

Prior Understanding 23

Meaning of Refuge 40

Foreword

Faith in Buddhism is a work of His Holiness Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara, the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, which explains on Buddhism clearly for beginners, and also gives sufficient guidance for further study and practice of Buddhism. This book has been published in the Thai language many times.

Mr James Hopkins, an American who once served for Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation, Office of the Prime Minister in Thailand has shown his impression in this book and translated it into English. When translation was complete, the manuscript was offered to the Office of the Supreme Patriarch's Secretary. Later, Phra Chad Dhammachando, an American monk disciple of His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch who has been spent more than 15 years in Thailand kindly proofed and revised it. The Office of the Supreme Patriarch's Secretary wishes to express its deep gratitude to both of them for devoting their valuable time and painstaking effort in contributing this work.

May this book be a further guiding light for understanding Buddhism and be a great benefit in general.

The Office of the Supreme Patriarch's Secretary

March, B.E. 2536 (1993)

Translator's Introduction

This translation of *Faith in Buddhism* is from the Thai book entitled "*Khwam Khaochai Ruang Phra Buddhasasana*," which was first published in the Thai language on October 3, 1988, marking the occasion of the 75th birthday of HisEminence Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara.

At the present time, the Venerable author, **Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara** *(Charoen Suvaḍḍhano)*, is the abbot of Wat Bovoranives Vihara, the major Royal Monastery in the capital city of Thailand, Bangkok. His Holiness also holds the position of the 19th Supreme Patriarch of the Chakri Dynasty, being the 5th in the reign of His Majesty King Bhumiphol Adulyadej.

His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch was born into the Gajawat family on October 3, 2456 B.E. (1913) in Muang District of Kanchanaburi Province, located about 130 kilometers north-west of Bangkok. He received a primary education at Wat Devasangharam School in the province. He was ordained a novice (sāmaṇera) when he was 13 years old in 2469 B.E. (1926), and in 2475 B.E. (1932) Sāmaṇera Charoen passed an examination in *nak dhamma chan-ek*, the third and highest level of Dhamma Study. He also passed the exam for *parian si prayok*, the fourth level in Pāli language studies. In the following year, he was ordained a monk in Kanchanaburi at the Devasangharam Monastery. Continuing his studies in Bangkok, he was given new ordination as Venerable Suvaḍḍhano Bhikkhu, with the Supreme Patriarch Vajiranyanavong as Preceptor, at Wat Bovoranives Vihāra the next year. After furthering and completing his Dhamma and Pali studies to the highest grade *(parian kao prayok)* or the ninth level,

he succeeded the Venerable Chao Khun Phra Brahmamuni as abbot of Wat Bovoranives in 2503 B.E. (1960), and was promoted to the title of Phra Sāsanasobhaṇa and was also made director of Mahāmakuṭa Buddhist University.

He was awarded the ecclesiastical title of '**Somdet**' in 2515 B.E. (1972) and given the title of *Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara*. On April 21, 2532 (1989), His Majesty King Bhumiphol Adulyadej awarded him the position of Supreme Patriarch of the Thai national monastic order.

A translation such as this has many difficulties, not the least of which is the profundity of the subject matter and the inadequacy of the translator's understanding and translating ability. This work exhibits many of the characteristics of formal Thai writing: long and complex sentences with multiple clauses, predominant use of the passive voice, and a lack of punctuation. The translator has done his best to transform the original manuscript into the English language using the grammatical and stylistic conventions of written English; however this effort has been hampered by fundamental differences in the two languages.

Certain recapitulations and repetitions have been omitted in this translation. In an attempt to make this translation accessible to all, most Pāli terms have been translated. However, readers should note that on their first occurrence the Pāli words are usually shown in parentheses; also the English translation is normally consistent throughout the book. Several words were left untranslated as an English equivalent was either difficult to find or too clumsy compared with the original concept. Therefore, a glossary has been included at the end of the book.

The Translator

What is Buddhism?

The question: **"What is Buddhism?"**, is a very general question that requires a very general, all inclusive answer. It would be quite difficult to give a complete answer unless one were to reply, *"the instructions and teachings of the Lord Buddha."* This question was often asked in the time of the Lord Buddha; the answer given was the most suitable one for the listener. It was short and concise but covered only one aspect of the subject. Answering in the most suitable and concise way one must have a thorough understanding of Buddhism. Even then there will arise the question: When can one's understanding be said to be thorough? Does this mean reading the entire Pāli Canon (Tipiṭaka)[1]? If that is the case, then there would still be the objection: that is only textual knowledge. It is similar to having textbook knowledge of herbal medicine, but not recognizing even a single tree that has medicinal value. Studying the entire Pāli Canon is only academic knowledge; that is, studying simply to memorize. If one hasn't yet practiced the

---

[1] *The* Tipiṭaka *(three baskets) is the collection of traditional Theravāda Buddhist scriptures recorded in the Pāli language.*

teaching, one cannot have gained the knowledge that comes from that practice. Even if one has practiced but has not yet gained the results, which are clear knowledge and complete comprehension, one doesn't yet have knowledge of paṭiveda, which means complete penetration; that is, insight which knows clearly. This insight, it should be understood, has many levels.

Therefore, complete knowledge of Buddhism arises only when one has advanced to the stage of the highest level of penetration. When wisdom has arisen at this stage, then the reply to the previously asked question can be given correctly and concisely. But, the reply can only be given to one facet, or one aspect, because according to the standard replies that have been given, each person has replied to a different aspect. Each is likewise correct according to a specific aim. For those who still lack thorough knowledge and are only interested in studying the established tradition (the scriptures as found in the Tipiṭaka) so they can grasp the way of Buddhism, they may reply adequately according to that tradition.

The Order of Monks (Saṅgha), since the earliest times, has strictly observed the practice of imparting the teachings according to the tradition; due to concern that to do otherwise would misrepresent the Lord Buddha. Misrepresentation here means: stating that the Buddha has said this or that; when in actuality, He has never said such a thing at all: this is called misrepresentation.

Therefore, sermons of the monks refer to the Pāli language texts (the original master texts) and explanations follow along the lines of those texts. Even when asserting that something is a fundamental teaching, reference is usually made to other statements of the Buddha. This can be said to be a custom in the Theravāda tradition, which has maintained Buddhism in its' original form. This is one reason it is said that even though those who listen to sermons don't understand, the monks continue to deliver sermons, people still listen, and the original lineage of Buddhism continues to endure without being altered.

Many people who are interested in Buddhism say that it is not a religion, but rather a philosophy. Because, when compared with Brahmanism or Hinduism which is found in India, there is quite a difference. That religion contains many rituals. Actually, the word religion-according to the root meaning as found in a dictionary-means; 'bound together', meaning bound together with the deity one believes in. This demonstrates faith in the deity's power which is superior to that of humans. This also includes powers that are worshiped in their role as creators and governors of the universe, which means displaying one's beliefs as action and worship. The origin of the word 'religion' was related to a deity, but it later came to be used in a broader sense including special systems of faith, worship, and behavior that combine ethics and philosophy. These in Thai are

called religions, such as: Christianity, Brahmanism and Buddhism. Thus, they are all called religions. According to the origin of the word, it should only be used with reference to religions that have an attachment to and reverence for a deity. Thus, worship rituals are inescapable because it is necessary to worship deities, who are believed to be creators and governors, by using methods that, as understood by humans, please the deities. But the word should now be understood in its broader sense to include all forms of belief as any other use of the word would be misunderstood. In Buddhism itself, many ancient terms have been borrowed from Brahmanism: such as Arahanta, Nibbāṇa, and Bhagavā. When these terms are used with new explanations following the tenets of Buddhism, it should be considered as the evolution of language as well. However, it should be understood that Buddhism does not mean to encourage attachment like other religions, but rather to present the truth for people to know and apply in order to gain complete freedom; and in complete freedom they will not be attached to anything at all.

The word *'religion'* is most appropriate. We translate it as 'teaching' or 'instruction'. Buddhism is a wholesome teaching; that is, the teaching to abandon evil, to perform virtuous deeds, and to cleanse one's mind until it's pure. There is absolutely no teaching instructing one to commit evil deeds, neglect virtuous deeds, or defile one's mind. This alone is enough to see

that Buddhism is a religion; that is, teachings which are pure.

As far as 'philosophy' is concerned, the dictionary reveals that the original meaning of this word was "the love of knowledge, or the love of intelligence." It means study, or the discernment of the various processes that surround thoughts and actions, including theories or the investigation and research of principles or laws that determine the order of the universe. In Thai we call this 'pradchaya', which is a Sanskrit word that is the same as the Pāli word, 'paññā' (wisdom), and is only half the translation of the word 'philosophy' (Philo = love, sophia =wisdom, paññā or pradya). The word 'love' is still missing, and when the word (which means merely the love of research and the quest for wisdom) is added, philosophy is only knowledge that is inconclusive, and cannot be confirmed as correct. It can immediately be seen that Buddhism is certainly not a philosophy because it is comprised of the teachings of a Buddha: One who is in possession of knowledge that is perfect.

Teachings of Buddhism

Buddhism is replete with numerous Dhamma principles[2], from which each person may select and practice, but this does not mean that one is to practice every item without being selective. This is similar to a department store that offers various commodities for each shopper to select and purchase according to one's needs. This does not mean that one is to buy everything without being selective; whoever wants a certain item will purchase it according to his or her own purchasing power. Some Dhammas found in Buddhism are alike; the practitioner should first know what is needed and what capacity one has for practice; that is, one must know oneself in terms of one's social standing. If one is a lay person, then one should practice the Dhammas for the laity; acting as a half-lay person and half-monk is not proper. Many actions, when performed by lay people were not normally declared as demeritorious by the Lord Buddha; yet, when performed by monks, those same actions bring immediate demerit. Thus, demerit has many levels; as does merit. For example, monks have 227

---

[2] Dhamma is *the liberating law discovered and proclaimed by the Lord Buddha.*

precepts (sīla); meaning that if monks violate their precepts there are 227 types of demerit. For lay people there are five or eight precepts[3]; meaning that if lay people violate their precepts there are five or eight types of demerit. Thus, the demerit of lay people is much less than that of monks. If one were to apply the demerits of monks to lay people then it would have to be said that lay people commit many demeritorious actions every day, but no one would say that. If lay people were to try to apply the precepts of monks, it would be said to be unacceptable. For example, not working for their livelihood and going on alms rounds, although indicated for monks, would be demeritorious if done by lay people. Were monks to work for their livelihood like lay people and abandon their alms rounds, it would be unacceptable as well.

---

[3] *The five precepts are:*

1) I undertake the rule of training to refrain from destroying living creatures, 2) ...refrain from taking what is not given, 3) ...refrain from wrong conduct in sexual pleasures, 4) ...refrain from false speech, 5) ...refrain from the use of intoxicants which are the occasion for carelessness. *(cont. next page)*

The eight precepts include changing the third precept as ...refrain from unchaste life, and the addition of the following:

6) ...refrain from eating at the wrong time (after noon), 7) ...refrain from dancing, music, going to see entertainments, wearing garlands, smartening with perfumes and beautifying with cosmetics, 8) ...refrain from lying on a high or large sleeping place.

Buddhism has a special characteristic: it demands investigation or reflection. This is not my own idea, it is a point of Dhamma found in the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (bojjhaṅga); called, investigation of Dhamma (dhamma-vicaya). The teaching is: "One should select Dhammas wisely, or by finding the root cause." People who study and use wise investigation tend to understand the Dhamma correctly. Those who misunderstand, due to lack of study and investigation, sometimes like to show off their knowledge that is partially correct, or partially or completely incorrect. Some people like to study and query asking such questions as the following:

Question: Does Buddhism teach materialistic development?

Answer: Before proceeding, it must be understood that Buddhism is neither economics nor any other such discipline. It is a religion; that is, instructions and teachings that aim for wholesome behavior. Initially, the Lord Buddha taught with a supramundane aim: transcending the world, because He was teaching ascetics who had that objective. Later, He gave instruction for those who were as of yet unable to transcend the world, of which there are many. This is called householder's Dhamma *(gihi-dhamma)*, or Dhamma for laity. He gave instruction in the Dhamma for rulers, such as the teaching known as the 'present benefit' *(diṭṭha-dhammikattha)*, and 'future benefit' *(samparāyikattha)*. This

means things that are needed in the immediate present, such as items for daily use and consumption; are gained by diligence. Additionally, there are other things that will be needed for the future, which will arise when correct faith is the starting point. From what has been said here, it can be seen that the Lord Buddha taught the acquiring of wealth; firstly for personal use, and secondly for various charitable donations. This is to be considered as future benefit, since if one doesn"t acquire personal wealth, then from where will one get gifts for charitable donations? Before learning about charity, one is instructed to earn one's living.

Question: Thailand was not like this in the past; now it seems to have changed a great deal materially. The lifestyle of the Thai people has changed; many things are frightening and dangerous now. Does Buddhism teach anything that can put a halt to this trend?

Answer: Buddhism does not obstruct national development, but teaches people to cease ways that are generally dangerous or destructive. The teachings on faith, virtue, charity, and wisdom in the section on future benefit are Dhammas that are widely propagated. Still, many people misunderstand and charge that Buddhism is appropriate for people who are already dead, because it aims for results in the next life or in the world beyond [death]. Actually, these Dhamma principles are for restraining movement in the wrong direction; for example, regarding faith (peoples' beliefs), if one believes incor-

rectly, it means that one has already gone halfway in the wrong direction; likewise, if one believes correctly, it means that one has already gone halfway in the right direction. Thus, the teaching emphasizes the belief in kamma (action): good and evil actions performed by oneself for which one must receive the results. When one believes this, one will surely refrain from heading in evil or dangerous directions. We aim or hope for growth in the future. The principles of Dhamma for future benefit are principles for creating growth and security for our future which may be the next hour, next month, or next year. Thus, the teachings of the Lord Buddha on material growth are teachings that are perfect for both the present and future.

Principles of Kamma

Most people still believe in a creator god who has the power to create danger and good fortune. Buddhism, on the other hand, teaches that people are owners of their kamma (action). Happiness or suffering is the result of one's actions. Therefore, people should change so that they fear their evil actions as much as they once feared a creator god. When thinking of kamma, people tend to think of it as a dark, dreadful entity; something to be feared, poised to render punishment. Kamma thus becomes like an unfortunate person who is always understood as being evil. When people are happy, they say it is due to merit and accumulated virtue (pārami); past action is thus not usually related to virtue according to most peoples' understanding. Furthermore, when people act in the present, they don't think about kamma (action) because they feel it is not relevant. Kamma thus becomes something only from the past that is fearful, waiting to cause suffering at some unknown time and cannot be prevented. It seems the misfortune of kamma that people understand it that way. In fact, Buddhism does not teach people to understand kamma in that way; it does not teach people to fear kamma, or

that they are slaves of kamma and under its power. Buddhism instructs people to recognize kamma, have power over kamma, and control their kamma in the present.

Kamma is a person's daily activities; that is, activities done with volition or intention. When there is action, such as thinking or speaking, intention always precedes that action. One preforms actions daily according to one's intention to speak, act, or think. This is one's daily kamma; thus one makes a lot of kamma and the making of kamma cannot be avoided. The main objective, according Buddhism, is to have people consider and recognize their present kamma: what is good, evil, and what should or should not be done. In other words, one should refrain from evil and improper actions, perform good deeds, and act properly. That which should be done, the Lord Buddha taught, is for the person to abandon all evil actions, and to perform only good deeds. If doing this caused suffering, He would never have taught it. But since abandoning evil action and preforming good deeds is beneficial and brings happiness, He did teach it. This exhortation of the Lord Buddha shows that people have power and control over their kamma; but remember that they also mustcontrol their intentions by being firmly established in the Dhamma. Dhammas such as: loving-kindness *(mettā)*, mindfulness *(sati)*, wisdom *(paññā)*, and dedication to the truth *(saccādhiṭṭhāna)*. These Dhammas relate to mind and

morality; which means intending to abstain from that which is improper, and doing that which is within the scope of proper action.

If one simply states: people have power over present kamma by controlling their intentions to abstain from or perform various actions; there appears to be no problem. But when speaking of past kamma that effects the present, there arises some problems; such as, kamma that was performed in a past life and renders unavoidable results in the present, causes one to fear the power of past kamma. It is similar to fearing dark powers that will bring certain ruin. We should now consider what Buddhism has to say about this.

The first point, taught Lord Buddha, is that individuals are the heirs of the fruits of their actions (kamma). This is a natural law and fundamental teaching; let there be no mistake about that. It is like the ancient Thai saying: *"Striking the ground with the fist"* [giving a perfunctory answer]. There are still many more laws of kamma involved. Like the many problems involved with striking the ground; where is it that one has struck the ground? When speaking of the 'ground', it covers the entire world; the word kamma is much the same, it covers everything. All people perform various kammas that are very complex and manifold. When will a kamma produce its results? There are rules for categorizing kamma that may be summarized as follows: kamma that is heavy or performed often will give results

before kamma that is lighter or performed less frequently. We perform actions that are both good and evil, thus we alternately experience happiness and suffering. When powerful or frequently performed good deeds yield their results people experience much happiness. Those people who are experiencing much suffering are the opposite. Whoever in this present life is not negligent, but performs good kammas that are called *'heavy or frequent'*; will experience that kamma before experiencing any bad kamma which one has made in the past. If lighter, evil kamma was committed in the past, there will be no opportunity for it to yield results. Therefore, whoever routinely performs much good kamma need not fear any evil past kamma he may have performed. One's wholesome deeds will help bring happiness and further growth in the future. If one regularly spreads loving-kindness it will halt any enemies one may have from the past. When one is treading the Buddha's Eightfold Path *(magga)* in order to put an end to suffering, one will then enter the way that goes beyond all evil kamma.

The Lord Buddha declared that craving *(taṇhā)* is the cause of kamma; the Eightfold Path is the way to extinguish kamma. Therefore, one need not fear the past, but be careful in making present kamma; guard the mind and establish it firmly in the Dhamma. The dhamma will take care of your welfare at all times and at all places.

Thais have had faith in Buddhism for many

centuries. It is said to be the national religion. Many foreigners who are not familiar with Thailand tend to wonder how Buddhism is related to and influences Thai society, politics, economics, and education.

Influence (or power) that will yield results according to one's desires is a term normally used in politics or worldly affairs; foreigners tend to use this term with regards to Buddhism as well.

First of all, it should be understood that basically, an individual or thing that wields influence, uses fear to cause submission. People are afraid so they submit to another's demands or desires. Whenever that influence or fear ceases, rejection immediately arises. Religions which teach people to fear may be said to have influence over frightened people.

Buddhism does not use threats to cause fear; on the contrary, it teaches the abandonment of fear, except the fear of wrong doing *(ottappa)*, which is explained in a different sense. Those who believe in Buddhism do so out of faith and wisdom, not out of fear that they will face damnation if they don't. Thai Buddhists tend to feel as though Buddhism is like their mother, father, or teacher; those full of loving-kindness and compassion. Or generally speaking, it is like friends who have loving-kindness and compassion. These individuals are not said to be influential people; it is more appropriate to say they have virtue, which generates respect, and not fear.

Therefore, it can be said that Buddhism wields no influence in any of the above-mentioned fields. As can be seen in social, political, economic, and educational circles, the Religion, whether it be monasteries or Monks, does not involve itself in demanding compliance in the sense that may be called wielding influence. The Thai people would not respect anyone who held religious status if they were to interfere in those organizations. But on the other hand, the Dhamma is deeply rooted in their minds, so that it shapes the character of many Thai people. Such as the respect and commitment found between parents and children, and teachers and students for example. The Lord Buddha's teaching of the 'six directions'[4] creates the basis for a society that is established on a foundation of gratitude and compassion. Ruling by the Dhamma of the 'Ten Royal Virtues'[5] is the

---

[4] *The six directions are: the Eastern (forward) direction, signifying mother, father, and children; the Southern (right) direction, signifying teachers and pupils; the Western (behind) direction, signifying wife and husband; the Northern (left) direction, signifying friends; the downward direction, signifying masters and servants; and the upward direction, signifying ascetics (monks) and disciples.*

[5] *The Ten Royal Virtues are: charity (dāna), moral conduct (sīla), self-sacrifice (paricāga:), honesty and integrity (ājjava), kindness and gentleness (maddava), austerity and non-indulgence (tapa), non-anger and freedom from ill-will (akkodha), non-violence and non-oppression (ahimsā), patience and forbearance (khanti), non-opposition and conformity with the Dhamma (avirodha).*

heart of the science of governing. The Dhamma is found in the Thai constitution in both its letter and meaning. The economy tends to expand according to the principle of present benefit; but it will not be a master that enslaves people to material things: Buddhism provides full protection. Education includes Buddhism as part of its curriculum, but the important point lies in using the knowledge gained from study; the Dhamma tends to be most relevant at this junction.

Faith in Buddhism

Another question that people tend to ask is: *when can one be said to have true faith in Buddhism?*

First of all, let us define the phrase, *"Faith in Buddhism."*Generally speaking, faith in Buddhism means; accepting and respecting the Lord Buddha as one's spiritual Teacher, and accepting and practicing the Dhamma teachings of the Lord Buddha. Faith in Buddhism also includes respecting, revering, and preserving objects that are connected with Buddhism; such as places of worship or monasteries, and the support and maintenance of those who practice the Buddha Dhamma, so that they can practice conveniently without obstructions. This is a brief definition or meaning of the phrase: "Faith in Buddhism." Actually, if one were to see if we used the phrase,"Faith in Buddhism" correctly, one would feel that it is not, strictly speaking, correct. So we rely on the fact that this phrase is widely used and understood. Therefore it is not necessary to change the phrase; we can use these words by giving them the meaning we want.

Faith in Buddhism as defined above, can be better understood by examining the history of the first Buddhists. For they were a part of the founding of the religion; which was dependent upon the Enlightenment of the Lord Buddha and His subsequent exposition of the Dhamma. Because, if the Lord Buddha had not revealed the Dhamma after His Enlightenment, He would only have been a Silent Buddha *(Paccēka-Buddha)*, that is an enlightened one who knows by Himself alone, but does not teach. Buddhism was initially established in the world when the Buddha's first sermon was completed and a listener had attained the Dhamma.

Having said this, we should recollect the Lord Buddha's first sermon that was given to the five ascetics (pañca-vaggiya). When Venerable Kondañña was the first follower to gain knowledge of the Dhamma, the Lord Buddha exclaimed: *"Kondañña knows, Kondañña knows!"* By this knowledge the Venerable Kondañña became the first adherent of Buddhism. The Lord Buddha taught the remaining members of the five ascetics until they, one after another, attained the Dhamma as well. He also taught others later on. When the listeners understood the Dhamma and gained faith, they asked for ordination from the Lord Buddha; becoming monks in His religion. Whoever had confidence or faith to a lesser extent took the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha to be their refuge and asked the Lord Buddha to consider them as laymen (upāsaka) or lay-women (upāsikā); which means,

"those who sit near the Triple Gem (Ratanattaya)."[6]

Buddhist faith in the very beginning, therefore, can be summarized in terms of mind and body. The mind, meant understanding the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha, or for those who were not yet able to understand, they had faith in Buddhism: this is the internal. As for the body, faith meant proclaiming oneself to be a monk by requesting ordination; later on there were nuns, and both male and female novices. For others, it meant declaring the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha to be their refuge and identifying themselves as lay people: this is the external. This then, at the very beginning, was faith in Buddhism.

It should be understood that those who have faith in Buddhism are the ones who have realized the Dhamma; that is, the Community, which in full is called *"the Community of Hearers" (sāvaka-Saṅgha)*; meaning that group of people who have heard the Dhamma of the Blessed One. Therefore, those who were called followers of Buddhism were members of the Order, or if not ordained, they were those who were counted as members of the Community. A Buddhist follower, according to the true fundamentals of Dhamma, is called, one counted as a member of the Community, which includes both lay and ordained.

---

[6] Ratanattaya is *the Triple Gem or the Three Jewels of the Buddhist Religion: the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha(Community, Order of Monks).*

Later, as Buddhism spread to other places, being a Buddhist follower changed from what it originally meant; that is to say, Buddhism became the established religion of one's family, or group, or country. The person born in a nation, group, or family that were Buddhist automatically became a Buddhist himself. Because of that, people were obliged to follow Buddhism from the time they were born, even though they didn't understand anything about Buddhism. Upon reaching adulthood, they automatically assumed that they were Buddhist. Sometimes they didn't even know what Buddhism was; who the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha were. Sometimes they didn't even practice the Dhamma; they behaved in ways that were demeritorious, and yet they still assumed that they were Buddhist. Eventually, this was the type of faith people developed. Therefore, if one were to ask a person who had that type of faith, or someone who was well established in virtue and Dhamma; if they were Buddhist, they would both reply that they were. Also, if one were to ask a murderer or a robber, he would likewise reply that he was Buddhist. Thus it seems they all call themselves Buddhists; those who are good, those who are evil, those who are interested in practicing the Dhamma, and those who aren't.

Therefore, it is necessary for us to examine our faith. At present, what kind of faith do we have? Are we Buddhists like those who kill, steal, drink, and are generally worthless? If we are we're in big trouble.

Therefore, we should consider what kind of Buddhist we really are, and what we can do to correct our behavior.

It's true, even though this mutated form of faith isn't as beneficial as it was before it is still useful because it is faith in an elementary form or faith in objects but not in a way that realizes the Dhamma. There is still respect for Buddhist holy sites and material objects. It can be compared to having some sugar cane that, although not eaten, still has its sweetness; whenever it is eaten, the flavour will be perceived. No matter what level of faith one has, at least there is reverence for material objects. When one contemplates the purpose of faith and aspires to study and practice Buddhism one will receive the benefits from that faith; at least there will be an inclination to improve one's conduct.

Prior Understanding

It must be understood that, faith in Buddhism means that it is necessary to practice the Dhamma according to one's ability; at the very least, one should uphold the five precepts. This will make one a proper Buddhist follower. One must depend on the following three principles:

1. Listening to sermons or studying the scriptures
2. Practicing or applying the Dhamma
3. Knowing and seeing the Dhamma

The first principle, listening to or studying the Dhamma is extremely important in the beginning. Even the Community is said to be bhagavato sāvaka-Saṅgho; the group of Hearers of the Blessed One, meaning that they must hear before they can know. In the beginning, when one becomes a Buddhist follower, it is necessary to listen to, or study the Dhamma in order to know enough to establish one's practice.

Buddhism then, in summary, teaches one to refrain from evil, act virtuously, and purify one's mind according to the principles proclaimed in the Fundamental Exhortation *(ovāda-pātimokkha)*. Furthermore, there

are other principles which Buddhists should study and remember; such as the law of kamma and the Four Noble Truths (ariya-sacca)[7] These are essential, cardinal components of Buddhism.

Buddhism must rely upon language: either Pāli or another language that we can hear or read and understand. The language of the Lord Buddha can simply be called, *"Dhamma-language."* This is something that we should understand.

The Dhamma-language, which the Lord Buddha used for teaching, is said to be complete and pure; both in the letter (word) and meaning. It is not necessary to edit the meaning or the words, they are in agreement; the words that were expressed are the same as the meaning; there is no confusion. It is not like everyday language, such as the language of the marketplace. For example, the spoken word 'partaking of rice,' (honorific Thai) means 'eating rice.' Here, 'partaking' means 'presenting.' Thus, 'presenting rice' does not mean eating rice; we say 'presenting rice' but it means 'eating rice.' Most of our spoken language is like that but the Dhamma-language of the Lord Buddha is not like that; when He said, 'presenting rice,' it always meant 'presenting rice;' when

---

[7] *The Four Noble Truths (ariya-sacca) summarize the Dhamma realized and taught by the Lord Buddha: 1) the truth of suffering; 2) the origin of suffering; 3) the extinction of suffering; and 4) the path leading to the extinction of suffering.*

He said, 'eating rice,' it meant 'eating rice.' There are many other words that have been taken from Dhamma-language into spoken language, but they are used improperly. For example, if one is angry, one says 'moho,' but actually it means 'deluded' in Pāli, not angry. If one is jealous, one says 'ritsaya,' which means desirous, but does not mean jealous. Here the words and the meaning are not in agreement. The Dhamma-language is not like that; the words must be the same as the meaning that was intended by the Lord Buddha. Because of this, even though Buddhism has existed for several thousand years, we can depend upon the words that were spoken as having perpetuated the meaning of the Dhamma; because the words and the meaning are not in discord like language that is used for everyday communication.

Furthermore, it is necessary to know the occasion or the reason for which the Dhamma was expounded. We tend to understand these tales as traditional, but here it means to understand the context in which the Lord Buddha gave the teaching. When the Lord Buddha expounded the Dhamma, He used an occasion as a stimulus; He did not just teach without relevance. For example, if He were to pronounce a verse of the Dhamma, He would consider the context and what should be spoken on that occasion.

The Venerable Elder Cakkhupāla Thera[8] practiced so diligently he became blind in both eyes, but finally attained Arahantaship. After becoming an Arahant, he meditated one evening after a rain storm by walking back and forth. He tread upon many Tussock moths because of his blindness. Some monks who saw this, not knowing he was an Arahanta, said that when his eyes were still good he failed to practice diligently enough, but when he became blind, he was so diligent he killed many insects. The Lord Buddha affirmed that Cakkhupāla was an Arahanta, and had no intention to kill those beings. Consequently, He expounded a verse to teach the monks as follows: *"Dhammas are forerun by mind; mind is chief, mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with a wicked mind, then suffering follows one, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox."*

The Lord Buddha expounded this verse using the occasion as the catalyst and proclaimed the Dhamma that was appropriate for that incident. From this we can see that the study of anecdotes, spoken upon various occasions, is extremely important in enabling one to practice Buddhism correctly and effectively.

Many people complain that they have faith in Buddhism but fail to receive the results they think they should obtain from that faith. For example, though they

---

[8] *A Thera is a monk who has been ordained for at least 10 years.*

uphold the precepts or make charitable donations, they are still poor or have difficulties. Unlike those who seek their fortune-both directly and indirectly,-who have no virtue or Dhamma, but still find security and happiness. Or they say that Buddhism, in various ways, leads to deterioration. This is because they have not studied the occasions that are the primary sources for the teachings of the Lord Buddha. Though He taught aiming directly for liberation *(vimutti)*[9], or transcendence and abandoning of the world, yet for those who were still unable to transcend the world, He also expounded the Dhamma for the gradual attainment of present and future benefit. Some points of the Dhamma were pronounced for monks who had already abandoned householders' conditions, and some were for householders. Therefore, in order to practice the Dhamma, one must know the occasion; this means knowing the primary source for which the Dhamma was expounded, for what level of people, and the expressed cause: then one can use the appropriate Dhamma to obtain good results.

If the Lord Buddha had taught us; what Dhamma would He expound? Assume that we are students, or are of working age and are aiming for occupational advancement, or for honor and rank. If we were the occasion: what Dhamma teaching would be appropriate

---

[9] *Vimutti (liberation or emancipation from suffering) is the ultimate goal of the teachings of the Lord Buddha.*

for us? The teaching would refer to present benefit, which is the attainment of security and the accumulation of wealth. Also included would be the teaching, *"future benefit"*, which will facilitate continued happiness in the future, and also will disseminate that happiness to other people by encouraging their faith in that which is worthy of respect, and by rousing morality and good conduct.

Suppose that we are experiencing suffering from the loss of wealth or separation from loved ones. What would the Lord Buddha teach us in this case? He would instruct us by explaining the way of nature; that is, one must be separated from everything one loves and cherishes, in order to get us to understand the laws of nature.

Therefore, if we consider ourself and our present situation as the occasion, and imagine what the Lord Buddha would teach us, we should then be able to select and practice those teachings that are appropriate to our own situation. Then we will receive the benefits of the Dhamma; there will be no harm at all. Whenever we do not receive benefit, it is because we have taken up and practiced the Dhamma that was intended for others, and is therefore, not appropriate for our situation.

In insight practice *(vipassanā-dhura)* it is also necessary to use what is pertinent for one's own occasion. Therefore, I will refer to another story from the scriptures: that of the Venerable Culapanthaka.

The Venerable Mahāpanthaka Thera directed the Venerable Culapanthaka to study one verse for four months, but he could not master it because he was quite dull of mind; so he was told to go away. The Venerable Culapanthaka thought of leaving the monkhood. As he was departing at dawn, he happened to meet the Lord Buddha who asked him of his situation; and he explained. The Lord Buddha then consoled him and led him to His residence where He sat him facing east and gave him a clean wiping cloth with instructions to repeat the words: "wiping, wiping". The Venerable Culapanthaka looked into the sun and wiped his face frequently. The cloth became stained and soiled; he thought it was most pure and clean, but due to his wiping his face it became soiled. His mind tended toward the stream of insight: fixing on cessation and deterioration, such as the impermanence of the five aggregates (sankhāra), he attained Arahantaship. The achievement of successful results, as in this case, was due to the Exalted One knowing the situation and providing suitable instruction.

Therefore, one should learn the occasions that were the causes for the original teachings expounded by the Lord Buddha; take these and practice them correctly according to one's own situation. Then one will receive benefits; not harm, loss, or decline from Buddhism. Applying and practicing the Dhamma appropriately like this is called: practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. This is the first principle that should be

listened to, studied, and understood.

The second principle is practice. Once one has studied the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha, together with the occasion and the method of practice that is in accordance with the Dhamma, then one should apply that knowledge in order to become a person of good conduct, virtuous, and good hearted, with right view; which is called discernment or wisdom.

Practice must depend on faith; and it is faith that leads one to practice. If faith is lacking, one is incapable of practicing the Dhamma.

Faith means belief: practice is sometimes called upholding; which comes from the word undertaking or resolving. Faith and resolve taken together are reverence and practice: belief and practice must be coupled. This practice is an instrument for gauging the extent of one's belief. It is said that people who attend the monastery, uphold the precepts and listen to Dhamma teachings, or make charitable donations are people who have faith; this is stated based upon practice. In the Tika-Nipāta of the Pāli Canon it is stated that the Lord Buddha proclaimed that faith is composed of three components: 1) wishing to see virtuous people, 2) wishing to listen to the Dhamma, and 3) abandoning miserliness by making charitable donations. When these three components are present, then one is said to be a person who has faith. This is using practice as the measure of faith. Thus, faith is an extremely important principle. We must endeavor

to make our faith proper belief, not belief that is perverted or unsteady.

Faith which is perverted comes from not listening to and knowing Buddhism, or by just following what others have done before; emphasizing the material aspects rather than aiming to realize the Dhamma that is the true foundation of Buddhism. This can be seen in the production of Buddha statues as devotional objects to motivate people to remember the Lord Buddha, to generate faith, and to practice the Dhamma. However, as time passed by, belief became debased until images of the Lord Buddha came to be regarded as magic amulets. Good people have amulets, evil people have amulets; they all aim to have these amulets protect them while performing good or evil actions. Evil people who commit murder or robbery have amulets to protect them from danger arising from their evil-doings; police have amulets to protect them from danger while trying to capture evil people. This comes from belief that has degenerated; but it does not mean that these images are necessarily bad. If revered correctly, by considering them as refuges for the mind when doing good deeds, then the images can facilitate suitable benefits. But one must seek the basis for that which is fitting and proper by studying Buddhism, then one can know and practice the Dhamma as taught by the Lord Buddha. When this is done, then both faith and practice will be correct.

When faith is correct it is also necessary to make

it firm. It can be seen that sometimes one thinks that one's faith is firm: one undertakes the five precepts; from the precept of refraining from taking life to the precept of abstention from intoxicants. But later, one encounters an animal which one wants to kill, or sees an object which one wants to steal. Sometimes, if it is only a small item, one does not take it; but sometimes it is sizable and one cannot resist. One may meet with friends who are heavy drinkers; and faith disappears. One reverts to killing animals, stealing, improper sexual conduct, false speech, or consumption of intoxicants. This type of faith is not firm; therefore, one must establish one's faith firmly, and then one's practice will be secure.

Establishing ones faith firmly depends upon inner strength; which is developed by training, forbearance, and tempering. One must train the mind to be resolute in virtuous conduct, strive to establish the mind in wholesomeness, strengthen the mind in the way of goodness, and refrain from yielding to evil. This is the basis of concentration *(samādhi)*; that is, firmly to establish the mind: meaning to make the mind steadfast and resolute in that which is wholesome, and not yielding to that which is evil.

Another point regarding views; is the view that virtuous conduct is incapable of bringing about desired results, so people reject the precepts. Thus it is said that people fall into two groups: those who do not uphold the precepts because they feel that corrupt and unvirtuous

behavior brings desired results; and those who uphold the precepts because they believe that doing so brings good results.

Here we should consider the following: what is gained by upholding the precepts, and what is lost? What is gained by not upholding the precepts, and what is lost?

In not upholding the precepts when one kills an animal one gains meat for food, or one kills to satisfy one's wishes. Theft acquires possessions, sometimes so much so that one becomes wealthy. Sexual misconduct, false speech, and drinking alcohol all bring results corresponding to the actions committed. Those who do not uphold the precepts, but conduct themselves as stated above, not only receive, they also lose: they lose non-enmity and freedom from calamity. What do those who uphold the precepts lose? By abstaining from killing animals, they lose the opportunity to kill, and by abstaining from theft, they lose stolen goods. Abstention from sexual misconduct, false speech, and taking intoxicants; means that they lose the opportunity to commit those acts. But by upholding the precepts they gain non-enmity and freedom from calamity. They gain the benefits of virtue which the Lord Buddha taught: virtue conveys one to a happy state, brings wealth, and the extinction of suffering. Ordinary people tend to have a mixture of these two views and behave accordingly. To be firmly established in the precepts, one must see the value of them and the ill-effects of not upholding them.

One will have proper view when one's views are in line with the Dhamma. How should one straighten one's views to be in line with the Dhamma? Firstly, one must consider the gains and losses; compare them to determine which is worse, then decide which way is to be followed. But one must not decide based upon greed, anger or delusion, or when one is in one of these mental states. When one is experiencing one of these states one does not recognize good and evil, or right and wrong: recognizing these is discernment. But in those states there is either; very little, or no discernment or wisdom present. One is unable to decide anything correctly, free of any bias; and one may conduct oneself improperly. Therefore, in order to be correct, one must make decisions when one has tranquilized greed, hatred, and delusion. There is evidence to verify this point: that which one held to be good or evil when the mind was under the influence of greed, hatred, and delusion was one thing; and when the mind was free from those influences it was another. Consequently, one should investigate with wisdom that is free from greed, hatred, and delusion, in order to decide correctly. One may then see that results received due to corrupt behavior that violated the precepts, was only temporary gain: losses were much greater because of the creation of enmity and calamity. As for upholding the precepts, though one loses opportunities for some types of gain, one receives results that are better: the tranquilization of enmity and calamity, and the benefits of virtue as stated above. This

kind of understanding is a view that is in line with the Dhamma. Knowing how to judge by comparing good and evil, and then deciding in line with the Dhamma, is wisdom: which is what makes human beings particularly different from other animals. Without wisdom and discernment there is nothing that makes humans special: when one's views are in line with the Dhamma, one is able to conduct oneself better according to the extent to which one's views are correct.

The third and final point here is knowing and seeing the Dhamma, which is a very important principle. Though their views are aligned in terms of practice, Buddhists, if they lack knowledge and vision of the Dhamma, are only half-Buddhists or partial Buddhists: full Buddhists must have knowledge and vision of the Dhamma. Knowledge and vision of the Dhamma; in simple terms means, knowledge and vision that all compounded aggregates have birth and death as their norm. It is not only seeing the birth of a part of this group, but also having vision that penetrates past birth to see death; which is the deterioration and disintegration of those aggregates. This type of seeing is called vision of the way of nature, the norm. When this vision of the norm arises, one can reduce greed, hatred, and delusion that are the causes of improper behavior, addiction, and negligence: grasping and clinging can then be reduced.

An example of this is the following story: The younger brother of King Asoka the Great was designated

to be the Crown Prince. He once went out deer-hunting, spotted a herd of deer frolicking playfully, and thought; though those deer had only grass to eat, they were still quite exuberant. But why was it that those Buddhist monks who, in many ways, were being patronized by King Asoka the Great, with sumptuous food, etc., had no exuberance or fun? After returning from deer-hunting, he had an audience with the King and voiced his thoughts. King Asoka then appeared to be very angry with him and ordered his younger brother, the Crown Prince, to enjoy his royal wealth for seven days, after which he would be executed. The Crown Prince attempted to enjoy his wealth, but he could not help thinking that after seven days had passed, he would die. After one day passed, he thought that he had only six more days to live, and continued in this way until only one day remained before he thought he would die. He was unable to sleep, eat, or bathe; gradually he became very thin. King Asoka the Great then inquired of him: "You have been enjoying royal wealth such as this, filled with considerable happiness, yet why are you in this state?" The Crown Prince then answered, "How could I experience happiness when I have been constantly assailed by the thought that I have only seven more days to live, or six, or five, and so on; now I have only one more day before I die." King Asoka the Great then disclosed to him: "The reason I had you partake of the royal wealth and held your punishment in abeyance was to teach you by indirect means that exuberance and fun do not always arise from an

environment that is favorable to happiness. As Crown Prince, you had an environment that was much more conducive to happiness than those Buddhist monks had, yet you were unable to find happiness. Why was that? It was because you thought only of your death, that is why you did not experience happiness. Since those monks, who were well patronized by me, King Asoka the Great, constantly contemplated death, how could they have experienced exuberance and fun?

This is example demonstrates that by constant contemplation of birth and death, at the minimum, it will be a cause for non-negligence, restraint of evil inclinations and ruinous behavior; and stimulation for one to hasten to perform good deeds. At the maximum, it can facilitate attainment of the Dhamma realized by the Lord Buddha. The Lord Buddha proclaimed: "Kondañña knows! Kondañña knows!" The Venerable Kondañña heard the first sermon of the Lord Buddha, after which the Dhamma eye arose in him enabling him to see that everything that arises also ceases according to the way of nature. Therefore, understanding this law of nature, which is an extremely important principle of Buddhism that enables one to attain the Dhamma, is something that every Buddhist should endeavor to comprehend.

The principles that guide one to become a Buddhist follower are three in number: 1) the hearing or studying of Buddhism *(Pariyatti)*, 2) the practice of Buddhism *(Paṭipatti)*, and 3) the realization of the Dhamma

(Paṭiveda). When one possesses all three of these principles then one is a true Buddhist; that is, one who has faith in Buddhism. In summary, Buddhism has a method of belief that should be known from the very outset, namely; respect for the Lord Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, as the Three Refuges. Therefore, those who have faith in Buddhism have a true refuge that is secure; they are not forsaken (without refuge). Most other religions teach people to take refuge in one or more deities. Buddhism does not deny heavenly beings, but does not teach people to worship deities like other religions. The reason being that heavenly beings still have defilements and fear in the same way as ordinary humans do; mentally (spiritually) they are still mundane beings. The Lord Buddha eradicated all His defilements and fear, He is thus a refuge beyond misfortune for both heavenly and human beings; He is the Great Teacher of both groups. Most Teachers or Prophets teach humans to bind themselves as slaves to the deity; to surrender their beliefs to the deity as a slave submits absolutely to his master's orders. The Lord Buddha is the only Teacher who totally freed humans from slavery. He was a human who revered human knowledge and capabilities; He proclaimed the liberty and rights of all beings, because it is not only humans who have the right to life and happiness; all sentient beings have rights as well.

The compassion of the Lord Buddha pervades the entire universe; it is much greater than the compas-

sion of human beings which extends only to the human realm. Spiritually, heavenly beings are thus equal to mundane human beings. When they become disciples of the Lord Buddha, they may realize the Dhamma, and eliminate their defilements to become Noble Disciples *(ariya-puggala)*. Heavenly beings are at a disadvantage in that they may find it more difficult to eradicate their defilements because they experience much happiness: they become attached to happiness and are unable to see the truth of suffering. It is much the same with humans who experience great happiness: it is much easier for ordinary humans to see the Dhamma and eradicate their defilements. Belief in a single deity (monotheism) or multiple deities (pantheism) is unimportant in Buddhism: discarding deities completely, Buddhism loses absolutely no substance.

But we must respect and worship something; if we do not worship heavenly beings, then what should we worship? We should worship that which has the highest qualities, which is truly respected by both heavenly and humans beings; namely, the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha; this then, is the abolition of slavery for oneself by the method of the taking refuge in the Triple Gems.

Meaning of Refuge

It should be understood that Buddhism does not aim to have us worship the Lord Buddha as a heavenly being with supernatural powers, but rather aims to have us venerate the Lord Buddha as a genuine Buddha (one who is truly enlightened by Himself and then teaches others), to have us venerate the genuine Dhamma (proclaimed by the Lord Buddha), and to venerate the genuine Saṅgha (Community of practitioners). These Three Refuges are real and can be relied upon. This being the case, some people may doubt that the teaching of the Lord Buddha; that the self is refuge of the self, may be contradictory to the teaching of the Three Refuges. Because normally, the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha are the refuges. There is an often recited verse that both affirms the three refuges and refutes any other refuge that runs as follows: *"The Lord Buddha is the highest refuge, for me there is no other refuge; the Dhamma is the highest refuge, for me there is no other refuge; the Saṅgha is the highest refuge, for me there is no other refuge."* If one listens to this only superficially, it appears that these three contradict each other, but that is not so.

Firstly, let us be clear about the three objects.

Even though they are different in a material sense, they are the same in substance; because none can be separated one from the other. The Lord Buddha realized the Dhamma, that Dhamma the Saṅgha preserves, and the Saṅgha are the disciples of the Lord Buddha; thus the three are interrelated. They are similar to three wooden staffs that are leaning one upon the other. When one takes refuge in one of these, one thus depends upon all three. In another sense, the Lord Buddha is the supreme refuge; as likewise are the Dhamma and the Saṅgha, according to the specific characteristics of each object. Furthermore, the scriptural recitations are simple expressions: there are no other refuges besides the Lord Buddha, there are no other refuges besides the Dhamma, there are no other refuges besides the Sangha; other than these Three, there are no other refuges.

At this point, we arrive at the problem of whether this is in contradiction with the teaching of taking refuge in oneself. In actuality, these three refuges are called, "saraṇa," while the refuge of the self is called, 'nātha', but we need not investigate the Pāli language root words. These teachings are not contradictory, but in fact, are in the utmost accordance with each other. If we compare our lives to a journey: one takes refuge in the Lord Buddha as the guide, in the Dhamma as the way, in the Saṅgha as those who continue to point out the way, and in oneself as the wayfarer. The self here means our own self, which is something which one cannot forsake;

one must take refuge in oneself from the moment of birth.

Think about this a little: a child cannot depend upon itself; one's mother and father must provide every manner of support, yet the child must depend upon himself for the most important things. For example, the parents provide nourishment, but they can only place the food in the mouth of the child; the child must chew and swallow the food by himself; the body must accept and digest it. In chewing and swallowing the food, the child must depend upon himself to take action. Learning is the same: the child may depend upon his parents for placement in a school and for the payment of tuition fees, but the child must study by himself. He cannot depend upon his mother, father, or anyone else to study and gain knowledge for him while he sits by doing nothing. Studying to gain knowledge requires dependence upon oneself, upon one's body, and one's own power of intelligence for learning. This is called taking refuge in oneself. But how should one to take refuge in oneself so as not to be indolent and unsuccessful? One must practice according to the teachings and instructions of the Lord Buddha, who taught us to strive and persevere until we succeed. This is called taking refuge in the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha; that is, contemplating these three and practicing in accordance with them. They can be one's refuge and likewise one can take refuge in oneself.

However, there may be the problem: at the present time, where does the Lord Buddha reside? Students of Buddhist history would answer: at the present time only the Dhamma and the Discipline (vinaya), proclaimed by the Lord Buddha while he was still alive, are in existence. These were established as the representatives of the Exalted Teacher when He was about to pass away *(parinibbāna)*. But some students of the Dhamma may try to make others think by replying: "the Lord Buddha attained the Deathless Dhamma (amata-dhamma), He is therefore immortal." Thus at the present time, the Lord Buddha still exists and will exist forever. Where does He dwell? He exists in the Deathless Dhamma. Some Dhamma students may refer to evidence in the scriptures: it does not say whether the Lord Buddha and the Arahantas die and vanish, or die to be reborn again. This is because that which dies is the aggregates or the bodily aggregate (khandha-kāya). The Lord Buddha and the Arahantas are not aggregates. To say that they die and vanish, or die and are reborn, or die and whatever are all incorrect. Dhamma students still maintain that; saying that the Lord Buddha exists and is immortal is not baseless. If one wishes to see the Lord Buddha at this or any other time, one must resolve to practice Buddhism; train the mind for concentration, train discernment of the Dhamma, and one can see the Lord Buddha by oneself. This is because the lord Buddha has affirmed that: *"Whoever sees the Dhamma, sees the Buddha."* This testimony confirms that the Lord Buddha

exists and can actually be seen. Taking the Lord Buddha as one's refuge; as is expressed in the phrase: "To the Lord Buddha I go for refuge"; is therefore, not taking refuge in emptiness because the Lord Buddha has ceased to exist, but the Lord Buddha is a genuine refuge.

The method of practice used to take the Lord Buddha as one's refuge, is to reflect upon any one of the Lord Buddha's virtuous qualities, or contemplate generally as follows: the Lord Buddha was truly enlightened, truly pure, and had genuine compassion. He will appear in those virtuous qualities; causing loneliness and fear to disappear from one's mind. Or if one is anxious or depressed, that mood will vanish completely. Mental frustration will disappear; the best way to over come one's problems will be seen. This is true Buddha power. The important point is to keep the Lord Buddha in one's mind as one's true refuge. The Buddha will then appear as one's refuge. A mind that has such a refuge will be warm and not lonely, will be strong and not weak, will be brave and not fearful, will be pure and not sorrowful and murky. It tends to the arising of correct views, and is an instrument for leading one's life in the proper direction. When one has trained concentration and discernment of Dhamma until one sees the Dhamma, then one will see the Lord Buddha prominently and clearly. The Lord Buddha and Buddhism are real and can be reliable refuges for everyone in the world.

❑ ❑ ❑

GLOSSARY

Ahimsā: Non-violence and non-oppression
Ājjava: Honesty and integrity
Akkodha: Non-anger and freedom from ill-will
Arahanta: One who has attained the highest stage of perfection in the Buddhist sense (Nibbāṇa), final and absolute emancipation
Ariya-sacca: The Four Noble Truths summarise the Dhamma realised and taught by the Lord Buddha: 1) the truth of suffering (dukkha); 2) the origin of suffering (samudaya); 3) the extinction of suffering (nirodha); and 4) the path leading to the extinction of suffering (magga)
Ariya-puggala: The Noble Disciples who have reached one of the four levels of attainment
Avirodha: Non-opposition and conformity with the Dhamma

Bhagavā: Blessed One, Exalted One
Bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho: The group of Hearers (disciples) of the Blessed One
Bojjhaṅga: Factors of Enlightenment
Brahmanism: The indigenous religion of the peoples of India as prescribed in the Vedas, orthodox Hinduism

Cāga: Sacrifice
Cetanā: Volition

Dāna: Charity
Dhamma: The liberating law discovered and proclaimed by the Lord Buddha
Dhamma-vicaya: Investigation of Dhamma
Diṭṭha-dhammikattha: Present benefit
Dukkha: Suffering

Gihi-dhamma: Dhamma for the laity

Kamma: Action
Khandha: Aggregate
Khanti: Patience and forbearance

Maddava: Kindness and gentleness
Magga: The Path to Liberation
Mettā: Lovingkindness
Moho (Thai): Angry

Nātha: Protector, the refuge of the self in the conventional sense
Nibbāṇa: The extinction of suffering
Niccasīla: The virtue to be observed uninterruptedly
Nirodha: The extinction of suffering

Ottappa: Fear of wrong
Ovāda-pātimokkha: the Fundamental Exhortation or

Teaching proclaimed by the Lord Buddha: refrain from evil, behave virtuously, and purify ones' mind

Pacceka-Buddha: Silent Buddha; One who is self-enlightened but does not teach others

Pāli: The ancient Indian language in which the suttas were written down

Pañca-vaggiya: The Five Ascetics; the Lord Buddhaûs former fellow practitioners, to whom he delivered the first sermon after attaining enlightenment

Paññā: Wisdom, discernment

Pārami: Accumulated virtue

Pariccāga: Self-sacrifice

Parinibbāṇa: The complete extinction of all passions of the Lord Buddha, the Great Decease

Paṭivedha: Penetration, realization, comprehension

Pradya (Thai): Philosophy

Rattha-thammanun (Thai): Constitution

Ratanattaya: The Triple Gem; the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha

Ritsaya (Thai): Desirous

Sacca: Truth

Saccādhiṭṭhāna: Dedication to the Truth

Saṅgha: The Community who truly practice following the Dhamma proclaimed by the Lord Buddha; the Order of monks. Sāvaka-saṅgha: the Community of Hearers; those who have heard the teachings of the Blessed One

Sankhāra: The five aggregates of attachment
Samparāyikkattha: Future benefit
Samudaya: the origin of suffering
Sarana: Refuge
Sati: Mindfulness
Samādhi: Concentration
Sīla: Virtue or moral conduct
Sutta: Discourse in the Pali Canon

Taṇhā: Craving
Tapa: Austerity and non-indulgence
Tathāgata The Accomplished One, the Lord Buddha
Thera: A monk who has been ordained for at least 10 years.
Theravāda: The Doctrine of the Elders, Teaching of the Elders, the Southern School of Buddhism
Tipiṭaka: (Three Baskets) the collection of traditional Theravada Buddhist scriptures generally known as the Pali Canon
Tisaraṇa: The Three Refuges: the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha

Upāsaka: Laymen; those who sit near the Triple Gem
Upāsikā: Lay-women; those who sit near the Triple Gem

Vimutti: Liberation or emancipation from suffering; the ultimate goal of the teachings of the Lord Buddha
Vinaya: The rules of Discipline for the Order
Vipassanā-dhura: Insight practice

○○○

Generally speaking, faith in Buddhism means; accepting and respecting the Lord Buddha as one's spiritual Teacher, and accepting and practicing the Dhamma teachings of the Lord Buddha. Faith in Buddhism also includes respecting, revering, and preserving objects that are connected with Buddhism; such as places of worship or monasteries, and the support and maintenance of those who practice the Buddha Dhamma, so that they can practice conveniently without obstructions.